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ABSTRACT

The Australian Language Levels Project (ALL) is involved in the development of the guidelines for curriculum activities in both Languages-other-than-English (LOTE) and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), in Australia. The ALL Project developed two kinds frameworks that contain guidelines with a degree of flexibility needed to be adapted to specific instructional situations. The project proposal consists of an organizational and a curriculum framework, and processes for development, which include curriculum renewal, an integral relationship between professional and curriculum development, and broad national consultation. Specific characteristics of each of these components are outlined. A rationale for the framework approach to an ESL curriculum is also outlined; reasons for adopting it include: provision of opportunity to learn English and reach full individual and societal potential; continuity in elementary/secondary education; commonality across states and territories; and extension of national policy ideals to curriculum and practice. The situation regarding national ESL curriculum initiatives in Australia is also detailed. Contains eight references. (MSE)

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Penny McKay

ED 418 579

A National ESL Curriculum Framework - The ALL Projects Input

Penny McKay has been the Project Officer with the Australian Language Levels Project since 1986. This has involved the writing of guideline materials for LOTE and ESL, the subsequent inservice of the curriculum framework around Australia and consultancy work in syllabus and curriculum development (LOTE and ESL).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Over the past two and a half years I have been involved in national curriculum activities in both Languages other than English (LOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) as a member of the Australian Language Levels (ALL) Project.

The ALL Project is a national project which has been involved in the development of the *Australian Language Levels Guidelines* (Scarino, et al. 1988), which contain a curriculum and organisational framework for the teaching of languages in Australian schools. The input of ESL teachers, and the influence of current ESL method and research has resulted in the *ALL Guidelines* being broadly applicable to teaching ESL as well as LOTE.
During the development of the *ALL Guidelines* , inservice workshops and consultations have been held, and continue to be held, for LOTE and ESL teachers around Australia

I have had many opportunities to observe ESL programs, to listen to, to ask questions about and to discuss ESL issues with a range of teachers and administrators in ESL across Australia. As a result of these opportunities, I feel that I am in a somewhat unique position in ESL in Australia, in that I have been able to develop some sense of what is happening in ESL nationally.

From these observations and experiences, and after consultations with colleagues, I have come to to a particular view about ESL in Australia at present and it is this view which is the base for the proposal presented in this paper. I believe that a framework approach to guide national ESL

curriculum activities in Australian primary and secondary schools is needed, and that such a proposal is feasible at this time. This proposal has, in embryonic form , already provided a basis for discussion regarding national ESL curriculum activities, for example in national ESL Reference Group meetings at the Curriculum Development Centre in Canberra, and in ESL/ALL workshop activities with ESL teachers and administrators in several States/territories in Australia over the past year.

This proposal recognises and attempts to taken into account the present beliefs and values in ESL in all systems in the Australian school system. In Australian schools at present there are trends towards the following:

- the adoption of a view which recognises language as being at the centre of knowledge and learning

- an agreement in principle that all teachers in the 'mainstream' need to be alert to the needs of non-English Speaking Background (NESB) learners and able to provide language support in their teaching

- an understanding that, in addition to the above, there is a continuing need for ESL specialist teachers who can bring specific skills and information into the school

- an acceptance of the value of specifically targetted ESL programs for:
  (i) certain groups of learners (eg. learners at the lower levels of proficiency, learners who are mother-tongue illiterates)

(ii) certain learning contexts (eg where parallel classes/short-term withdrawal can more effectively meet the needs of learners, and/or make the most effective use of the resources available).

- a valuing of the learner as bicultural and bilingual, where the development of English is not seen as replacing, but adding to the first language and culture of the learner

2.0 A FRAMEWORK APPROACH TO NATIONAL ESL CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES

The use of the word "framework" in this proposal does not imply a rigid structure; a framework is needed which allows for different needs among learners, among teachers and schools, and among systems. At the same time, however, the notion of framework should not imply a structure and a set of guidelines which are so broad that they provide little or no guidance for users. In my consultations with ESL teachers across Australia, in consultations with teachers carried out by the ALL team, and in surveys such as David Nunan's survey in The Adult Migrant Education Program (Nunan, 1987) teachers have indicated that their work would be supported by having guidelines which give direction without prescription and allow for a coordination of efforts and expertise. Teachers are looking for guidelines with a dosage of appropriate flexibility, which allow them to operate according to the requirements of their own specific situation. Teachers have also indicated that many 'guidelines' or 'frameworks' remain too general to be of real practical use to them.

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Alongside an organisational framework and a curriculum framework, **processes for development** are suggested involving:

- curriculum renewal
- an integral relationship between professional development and curriculum development, and
- wide national consultation

Each of these is discussed below.

2.1 An organisational framework

In ESL there exists a wide range of programs, ranging from direct ESLteaching to ESL integrated into primary and secondary learning programs; and a wide range of learners with differing backgrounds and needs. An organisational framework is needed to reconcile the differences that exist between schools, between systems, and between states/territories. These differences often give rise to certain administrative and educational problems which can reduce the effectiveness of ESL programs, that is, which can reduce the chances of NESB learners to meet their full potential in our schools - a vital aspect of social justice in our schools system.

The mechanism proposed for the broad organisation of ESL learners is an *ESL Framework of Stages*, a framework of progressive, interlocking and age-related Stages. An organisational framework can provide a common frame of reference for planning **teaching and learning pathways** for NESB learners as their cognitive and language development, and ability to use English increase.The goals, suggested content and method for each

A framework is needed which:

- provides a proposal for a national co-operative and collaborative approach to curriculum development

- provides curriculum guidelines which will form an agreed conceptual base (beliefs about, for example, language learning, curriculum aims, and syllabus design) for the above

- allows for refinements and adjustments according to the needs of different systems, different programs and different learning groups

- allows for on-going renewal and improvement

Following on from the ALL Project's successful experience of framework development on a national scale in LOTE, two kinds of frameworks are suggested:

- an **organisational framework** is needed to provide coherence over the range of programs, the range of needs, and the range of learners in ESL;

- a **curriculum framework,** in the shape of a set of **curriculum guidelines**, is needed to assist program developers, material developers, and teachers to co-ordinate initiatives, to share resources and expertise, and to develop quality programs responsive to student needs.

Stage, will reflect the nature, needs and interests of the learners at that Stage. Individual Stages are described in terms of the content and skills appropriate for the different broad age groups and the kinds of learning activities through which knowledge and skills may be developed at each level.

The proposed ESL Framework of Stages has been described in detail in a Working Paper (McKay (ii), 1988) . This Framework of Stages is presented as a working hypothesis which stimulates discussion and reaction to occur; it is based on the same principles as the LOTE Framework of Stages currently being applied to development of programs and syllabuses nationally in LOTE, but necessarily takes into account different key variables as relevant in ESL - the broad age-group of the learners, the educational background of the learners, and the prior experience of English of the learners. Other variables are allowed for in syllabus and program development for particular groups of learners.

The development of an organisational framework for ESL which maps out the range of ESL programs for the range of learners, and describes learning pathways for ESL learners, requires careful consideration. It is clear to me that we can do this only if

(i) we accept that we **can describe** language teaching and learning pathways through K-12, and that

(ii) we have a curriculum framework which enables us to describe this development in a way which keeps language integrally related to knowledge and at the same time can describe it independently of mainstream content.

The ALL curriculum model allows this to be done, through the adoption of an activities-based approach (purposeful, active language use) and through its identification of five interrelated goals which integrate communication goals with other goals in the languages curriculum, but at the same time gives the communication goals a separate and central place. (see Diagram 1)

Diagram 1

THE ALL PROJECT'S FIVE INTERRELATED GOALS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

COMMUNICATION GOALS

SOCIOCULTURAL GOALS

LEARNING-HOW-TO-LEARN GOALS

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS GOALS

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

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2.2 A curriculum framework - a shared conceptual framework

The curriculum framework proposed here is based on the ALL curriculum model. It is a framework in the sense of a shared conceptual framework giving **guidance without prescription**, based on common principles of teaching and learning, and common goals, which will enable education departments, curriculum development groups, advisory staff, and teachers of ESL to work towards 'curriculum renewal' in the teaching and learning of ESL.

It is proposed that ESL learning activities, regardless of the approach to ESL teaching and support, can be brought together under one curriculum framework, in which common principles and common goals are agreed upon, and that from this common conceptual framework, and in combination with the proposed organisational framework, systems, schools and teachers can make decisions and refinements according to their particular context and the particular needs of the learners. A common conceptual framework gives us a common terminology across programs in one school, one system and across systems and states/territories.

Table 1 sets out a broad categorisation of the approaches to ESL teaching and support of NESB learners in Australian schools. Approaches have been categorised into policies and whole-school strategies direct ESL teaching cooperative teaching ESL-informed mainstream teaching. These four categories are then incorporated into an overview diagram (Diagram 2) which describes the pathways for applying such a shared conceptual framework to the support of NESB learners in Australian schools.

Table 1

APPROACHES TO ESL TEACHING AND SUPPORT OF NESB LEARNERS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

The following is a description of the major approaches to ESL teaching and support of NESB learners in Australian schools. In most systems, ESL programs cover all these aspects of ESL, though there may be different emphases, depending on the system's belief about the role of the ESL program and the ESL teacher, and the resources available.

Policies and whole-school strategies

For example:
- policies at national, system and school level
- structural decisions
- counselling services
- community liaison
- issues of inclusivity in the system, school and classroom

Direct ESL teaching

For example:
- ESL in intensive Language Centres *(where ESL is the focus of learning)*
- ESL-as-a-subject *(where ESL teachers teach ESL, perhaps on the English line in secondary schools)*
- withdrawal *(where ESL follows an ESL program which is not closely integrated with any mainstream program)*
- parallel teaching *(where the ESL teacher teaches the mainstream program to a group separated out from the mainstream class, providing specialist ESL teaching as she does so)*

Cooperative teaching

For example:
- joint planning
- integrated withdrawal *(where the ESL teacher takes a group out of the mainstream class, and integrates the ESL learning with the learning in the mainstream class)*
- team teaching *(where ESL teacher and mainstream teacher teach one class together, the ESL teacher teaching the mainstream area and providing specialist ESL support at the same time)*

ESL-informed mainstream teaching

Mainstream teaching, informed for example through:
- "ESL in the mainstream" inservice provision to mainstream teachers *(provide centrally or by ESL specialist on site)*
- language and learning across the curriculum support *(closely related to, or a wider version of above)*
- pre-service training involving 'ESL in the mainstream' issues.

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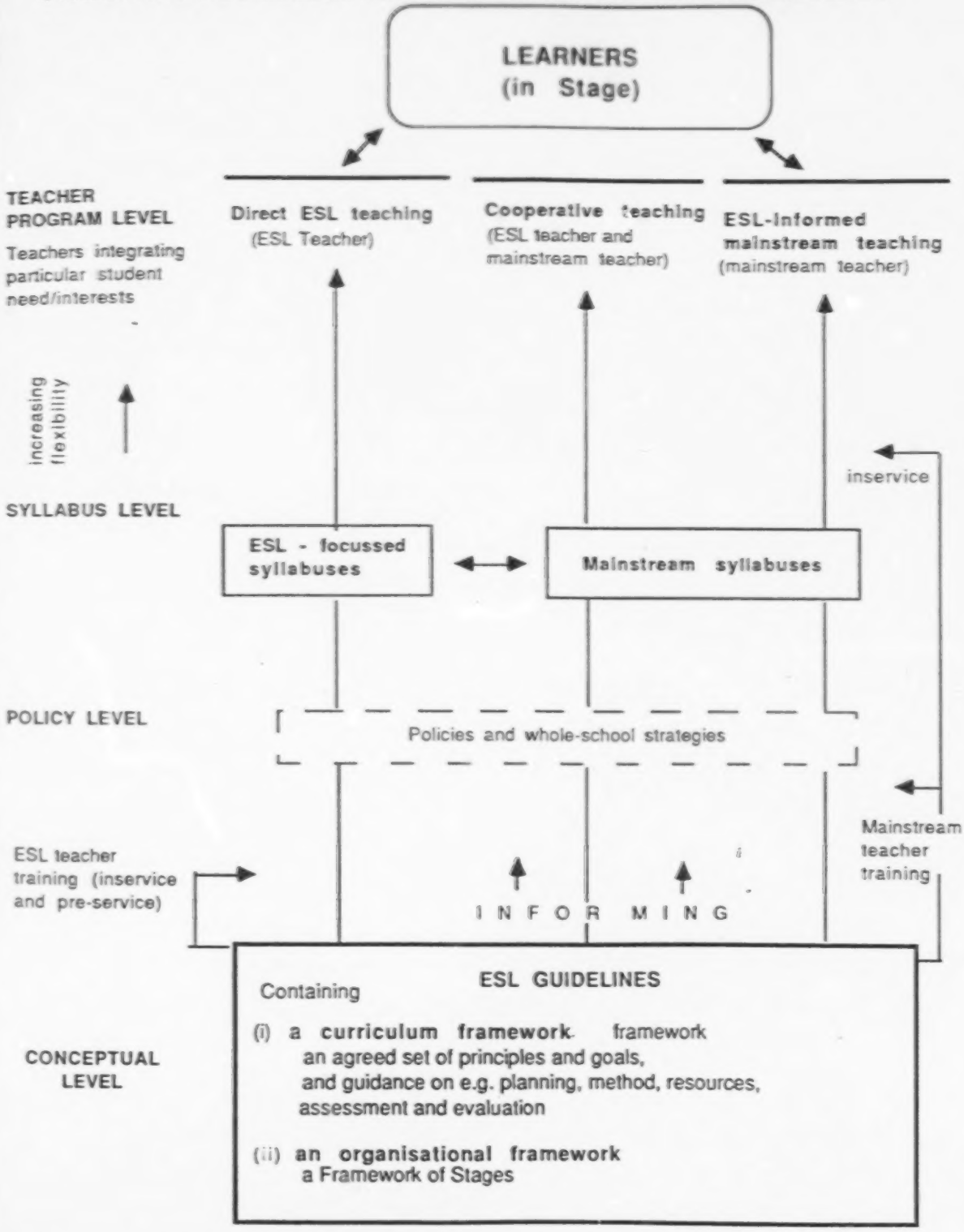
Diagram 2

SUPPORTING NESB LEARNERS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS: PATHWAYS FOR APPLYING A SHARED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



This proposal for the development of a framework and the application of the framework by systems and schools and teachers involve extensive national consultation and ongoing curriculum renewal processes.

The overview also describes how the following are integrated into the ESL curriculum framework proposal:

- a **set of guidelines** containing the organisational framework and the curriculum framework. (An agreed set of principles and goals, and guidance on eg. program planning, method, resources, assessment and evaluation) informing the four approaches to ESL teaching and support in schools, and also teacher inservice and preservice training.

- **increasing flexibility,** giving systems, schools and teachers the room to adapt and refine according to the policy decisions and needs of different systems, schools and particular groups of learners

- learners' progress tied to **broad age-related Stages,** to give an indication of pathways of learning

- **Stage descriptions** tied to the broad age-related Stages to inform the teaching and learning of ESL learners, regardless of the type of program in which they are learning

The ALL curriculum framework on which this proposal is based, is an internally consistent curriculum model, from course design on the one hand to assessment on the other. It is developed with reference to current thinking in language teaching research and is based firmly on teacher experience.

2.3 Curriculum renewal

Another significant feature of this proposed framework approach to national ESL curriculum activities is the concept of 'curriculum renewal'.

Curriculum renewal is a process which involves:

- an analysis or evaluation of a current situation, paying particular attention to its strengths, weaknesses and problems

- the search for and creation of alternative curriculum hypotheses which can be tested as possible solutions to the problems in the form of new syllabuses, new assessment schemes, new resources, new time/space/group allocations, and new teaching/learning strategies

- the highlighting of particular areas where research in depth is required

- the devising of a process for continuing teacher development so that teachers are able to renew their own curricula in the light of their own experiences

Curriculum renewal implies change over a long period of time, and it applies at the system level as well as at the individual teacher level. The concept of curriculum renewal is a useful one at the national level, where states and systems can come together to consult and agree on certain common fundamentals in a framework, and then perhaps move out again to further renew an aspect of the curriculum according to their priorities and context, so that a cyclical approach to curriculum change is adopted.

2.4 An integral relationship between professional development and curriculum development

The Curriculum Development Centre (Department of Employment, Education and Training) has made it clear that professional development through involvement in curriculum development should be regarded as a key strategy in any national curriculum endeavour.

> An underlying premise ...has been that the professional development of teachers goes hand in hand with the development of curriculum materials. The view of professional development being put is that it is an active rather than a passive process. That is to say, professional development is not seen as something to be done to teachers; rather it is something that teachers do in the context of their own professional learning. Involving teachers in the identification of existing products, determining new education needs, the formative evaluation of products and understanding the purpose and intention of new products is asking them to take responsibility for making professional decisions about the creation and use of such products. This is an important point to make; otherwise teachers are seen to be the recipients of professional development rather than the makers of professional development. (Kennedy, 1987)

2.5 Extensive national consultative processes

The adoption of extensive consultative processes is a further feature of this ESL curriculum proposal. Consultation has been integral to the development of the ALL curriculum model and guidelines. The ALL Project's wide consultative processes are suggested as a model for national consultation and participation; they have included a national Reference Group, expert consultants, and networks of teachers in each state/territory set up by the Reference Group members. During the writing of the *ALL Guidelines*, reactions to draft materials were sought nationally, responses were collated, and the information was used essentially to re-write the materials. The second draft also underwent

a similar reactive process, which led to further refinement of the materials. Further consultations through national meetings, inservice workshops and syllabus writing workshops continue on as the *ALL Guidelines* are applied in syllabuses and teaching programs.

3.0 RATIONALE FOR A FRAMEWORK APPROACH TO ESL CURRICULUM

Reasons for proposing a framework approach to ESL relate closely to issues of social justice, and to economies of resources and expertise.

- **The opportunity to learn English and to reach full potential - a social justice issue**

  The National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987) has stated that

  > English is...the primary and dominant language of the economic,social, cultural, educational and administrative sectors of public and private life... (Lo Bianco, 1987, 71)

  and has a commitment to providing ESL teaching and support

  > to enable the maximum achievement of social participation, and economic and educational opportunity. (Lo Bianco, 1987,86)

  For residents of Australia, a lack of proficiency in English can have a profound effect on their lives. It is essential that those NESB students in our schools who lack total facility in English should be able to achieve the necessary level of proficiency in the language, in order that they may reach their full potential.

To provide for social justice in Australian schools through ESL programs, we have the responsibility to support learners to learn English and to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to reach their full potential. The following features of the proposed ESL framework are central to achieving social justice.

- **K-12 continuity - a social justice issue**

  The proposed ESL Framework of Stages is designed to provide a description of broad, progressive age-related Stages through phases of schooling , independant of the mode of ESL delivery provided or available. A Framework of Stages can allow for transition over the different phases of schooling, provide multiple entry and exit points, short-term goals for learners, and allow portability as well as administrative convenience. All these factors help to provide coherence in the provision of ESL support for NESB learners, and can assist educational systems, schools and teachers to do justice to each child in terms of their language, cognitive, and social development in Australian schools, no matter where they are.

- **commonality across states/territories - a social justice issue**

  Broad commonality in principles and goals in ESL curriculum across Australia, and a collaborative approach to the development of a set of guidelines for the delivery of ESL, will assist to bring together the ESL field and to maximise energy and expertise. Decisions about ESL programs are made by administrators sometimes in the absence of a clear policy or a curriculum framework, and without the benefits derived from nationally shared experience and expertise.

There are a number of excellent development occurring around Australia, yet ESL administrators and teachers generally have little knowledge of, or access to, work being done in other States and frequently little knowledge of the specific context (for example, the organisational factors, groupings of learners, beliefs about language learning, curriculum aims) behind the materials, a factor which inevitably restricts their use in a new context.

An individual system may find it difficult to cater for the range and complexity of needs in ESL; a national approach promotes the possibility of sharing expertise and resources to meet the range of needs and also to help to rationalise curriculum development costs. These are factors to be considered in the current economic climate.

- **national policy ideals that permeates to curriculum practice - a social justice issue**

  In recent years a number of national initiatives have occurred. The National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987) has been developed; it outlines a policy statement for ESL in schools. The Key Centre for English Language Teaching and Research has recently been established at Macquarie University a related key centre in language assessment is soon to be allocated. All such national initiatives need to permeate to sound curriculum practice in order for the social justice ideals which they propound to become classroom learning reality. It is clear that ESL will need a coordinated **curriculum** effort if this is to happen.

4.0 THE CURRENT SITUATION

The current situation regarding national curriculum initiatives in ESL can be described briefly as follows.

4.1. The Curriculum Development Centre

The Curriculum Development Centre has held two National ESL Curriculum Reference Group meetings in the last two years, when representatives from each education system (State, Catholic and Independent School Board) in each state/territory have met in Canberra to begin discussions towards national activities.

4.2 The Australian Education Council

More recently, the Australian Education Council and the forum of Directors-General and Directors of Curriculum have nominated ESL as one of the areas which have priority in terms of national collaborative action. The nominated priorities are Maths, Technology, Science, English, LOTE and ESL in that order. Procedure is that a mapping exercise will occur, followed by the development of a policy statement and possibly a framework. This process is at the beginning phases but does point to a trend towards **national** activity.

4.3 Current ESL/ALL initiatives

Following an initial, tentative proposal for a national ESL curriculum framework based on the ALL model made in 1985, the Curriculum Development Centre provided the ALL team with funding for a feasibility study regarding the applicability of ALL to ESL. This feasibility study is continuing and has included case studies with a number of teachers in three states (WA, NT and SA) , with consultations and inservice with teachers across Australia, and documentation of aspects of the ESL/ALL proposal. There are a number of other outcomes from this work:

- **a growing consultative base**

  A network of contacts (administrators and teachers) has been established. Contact has also been made with a number of tertiary institutions, and a consultancy role has been established with the following specialists:

  Dr. David Ingram, Brisbane CAE, Brisbane

  Dr. Howard Nicholas and Helen Moore, La Trobe University

  Dr. Claire Woods, SA Education Department

  Dr. Anne Martin, SA Institute of Technology

  Professor Christopher Candlin, Macquarie University, will be consulted early in 1989

- **documentation**

  Working papers have been written regarding the ESL/ALL feasibility work, and have been made available for comment and reaction. A collection of ESL syllabus frameworks and units of work following the ALL model, produced and commented upon by ESL specialists, have been collected.

- **an initial indication of acceptance of the ALL model's applicability to ESL across Australia**

  A number of indications exist that there is an intial interest in and broad acceptance of the ALL model for ESL, in the case study responses, in the continuing requests for inservice and consultancy from different systems, and the initial responses from specialist consultants. Additionally, the model is being used as the basis for the state-wide SA ESL Curriculum Project, which is now progressing into its second year.

The close relationship that was maintained during the development of the *ALL Guidelines* with ESL, both in consultation with teachers, and with close reference to ESL research and methodology, has made this initial interest and acceptance a natural and not unexpected response. Important questions regarding the refinement of the model to the context of ESL in the mainstream still remain, and will be addressed in more detail in 1989.

- **a developing collection of ESL curriculum materials and guidelines from all states/territories**
  The ALL team has collected ESL materials from each state/territory.

The ALL team's work in ESL is being seen in the national context as an experimental project providing the groundwork for national ESL curriculum activity. All the documentation is available to anyone interested.

6.0 CONCLUSION

I have outlined a possible direction for national ESL activities based on my involvement at the national level. In conclusion, I would like to encourage you to see this work as a cooperative consultative venture in its own right, and one in which all ESL teachers can take part. This paper is presented as part of the consultative processes which have been proposed as essential to a national endeavour.

I believe it is worth our while to consolidate for a while, to give this a national boost of energy, then after this boost it may be appropriate and perhaps necessary for States to pull back again and work on their own priorities, or share with one or two other States on a priority area. The flexibility built into the framework model, and the curriculum renewal approach can allow this to happen.

This proposal is looking at setting the direction for the future, therefore even at such an early exploratory stage wide consultation is vital. Your reaction and your involvement are important and will influence the shape of any national ESL endeavour for the good of the ESL field and in particular for the good of the NESB learners in our schools.

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